

## **MAJOR IMPROVEMENTS AT CARBON COUNTY AIRPORT UNDER CONSTRUCTION FOR 2007 AND 2008**

**by Bill Krompel, Carbon County Commissioner**

For 2007, a \$4,200,000 capital improvements project is now under construction at the Carbon County Airport. Construction will last the remainder of this season and be completed during construction season of 2008 by local general and electrical contractors which further stimulates our economy.

The planning and fund securing process has been going on for the last three years. Project breakdown of funding sources, dollar amounts and specific improvements to the Airport are as follows:

1. \$2,300,000 Federal Aviation Grant
  - a. For design and construction of the last 2,900 feet of parallel taxiway. When completed next year, the taxiway will have a total length of 8,300 feet by 35 feet wide and is parallel to the airports main runway 18/36 which is 8,300 feet long by 100 feet wide.
  - b. Install a PAPI on the north end of the main runway 18/36. PAPI stands for Precision Approach Path Indicator. Because of significant changes in slopes and power lines north of the Airport, this visual lighting device will greatly improve safety when aircraft land on the north end of the Airport's main runway.
  - c. Rehabilitate and construct approximately 220 feet of aircraft parking apron. This will include one helicopter parking area.
2. \$1,000,000 Federal Grant to design and install an ILS (Instrument Landing System) at the Airport. This new addition will enhance safe aircraft landings during inclement and low visibility weather using electronic instruments.
3. \$600,000 State Grant from Division of Aeronautics for crack sealing, seal coating, and painting runway 18/36 measuring 8,300 feet long by 100 feet wide. The grant also includes funding to rehabilitate/reconstruct a portion of the main aircraft parking apron. The area to be rehabilitated will be to the south of the area being rehabilitated/constructed by the FAA grant.
4. \$300,000 Award from Carbon County Recreation and Transportation Special Service District to rehabilitate and relocate the tower and beacon and install helicopter pads. The value of having adequate infrastructure at our airport to support helicopter operations is illustrated by their effectiveness in fighting wildfires in our region like the recent Mathis Wildfire. This wildfire alone in Carbon County burned over 2,400 acres, cost \$2.4 million to suppress and threatened the lives of the citizens of Kenilworth and over a hundred homes there, as well as a major natural gas field and coal mine. The ability of the helicopters to shuttle firefighters and equipment to the wildfire and perform pinpoint precision aerial extinguishment by dumping up to 5,000 gallons of water or retardant per load by the larger helicopters saved thousands of additional acres of forest from burning and over an estimated \$2 million in costs. Even though a large tanker helicopter bills out while in operation at \$6,000 per hour.

Of Utah's 47 airports, the Carbon County airport accommodates approximately 14,550 takeoffs and landings each year, 700 of which are corporate jets mainly from the energy industry. Currently, the airport has the 5<sup>th</sup> longest commercial runway in the state. According to a recent State Division of Aeronautics study, the local economic impact of the Carbon County Airport is nearly \$4,000,000 a year and supports directly or indirectly 50 full-time equivalent employees who are paid \$1.22 million in wages annually.